

Trask defends her telling UH student to go

By Harold Morse

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Haunani-Kay Trask maintains it was all right for her to suggest that a haole student leave Hawaii and go back to the mainland because she did it in a public forum — the University of Hawaii student newspaper — in the tradition of free speech.

About 200 people crowded the UH-Manoa's Kuykendall Auditorium to hear Trask and three other panelists talk about academic freedom last night during a scheduled two-hour program that ran overtime.

The event was the first of a series of seven weekly forums presented by the Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace.

Trask, an associate professor and director of the UH Center for Hawaiian Studies, said she never met Joey Carter, the young man in question, and he was never in her class.

Her critics might have a case against her had he been one of her students and had she made her remarks to him in the classroom, she said.

Carter complained in an article in Ka Leo that he had been witness to flaws in Hawaii's racial harmony. Trask's response also was printed.

"Mr. Carter has the responsibility when he puts himself out there in a public forum to take the heat," Trask said.

Philosophy Professor Kenneth Kipnis, one of Trask's critics, said he respects Trask but profoundly disagrees with her on issues that he hopes are professional and not personal.

After agreeing with Trask on Hawaii history and the wrong done Hawaiians by Caucasians, he took pains to convince everyone he is not racist.

His mother is a Jew who left Poland in the 1930s, and many of his relatives were killed by Nazis, Kipnis said. He also said he was a civil rights worker in the South in the 1960s.

However, he said he views academic freedom as a privilege in a legal sense that carries responsibilities.

Where Kipnis spoke conversationally, Trask followed with a vigorous oration about how Hawaiians have been victimized by genocide against a native people; hers is a story of the conquerors' attempt to silence a survivor, she said. Carter came from the South and is a haole racist, she charged.

The other two speakers, Kathy Ferguson, associate professor of women's studies and political science, and Peter Manicas, director of liberal studies, expressed humor.

"This must be how it feels to be the backup man for the Rolling Stones," Ferguson said, as she followed Trask.